

VZCZCXYZ0006  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBUL #2459/01 2331147  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 211147Z AUG 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1001  
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 7834  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3839  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS KABUL 002459

DEPT FOR AFGHAN ELECTIONS TASK FORCE

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: Afghan Elections Situation Report Thirteen - 1600 Local,  
August 21, 2009

11. (U) The next sitrep will be issued at 2000 Kabul time. The Ops  
Center will close at 2100.

-----  
Atmospherics  
-----

12. (U) General updates

In a press conference Friday afternoon, the IEC said that counting  
the votes in all provinces, except Kabul, Baghlan, Nangarhar and  
Herat has ended.

In conversation with Ambassador Carney, at midday 21 August, IEC  
chairman Dr. Ludin agreed on the need for careful messaging,  
considering that candidates and their managers appear to be  
beginning to claim victory. He was grateful that the USG plans to  
underscore that only the IEC can give credible results and that the  
final results must await adjudication of complaints by the ECC. Dr.  
Ludin also accepted that prudent public administration practices  
argue that he should let the operational side of the IEC give press  
conferences until the final results are ready. In that context, he  
noted that chief electoral officer Dawood Najafi would give the IEC  
press conference at 1830 today and that field operations chief  
Mohamamd Hashim will take the VOA interview that Dr. Ludin had  
initially agreed to do.

The Canadian Embassy today spoke with Mohammad Natiqi, Spokesman of  
the Wahadat party (supporting President Hamid Karzai) to solicit his  
views with respect to the conduct of elections, outcomes, and  
results. He assessed yesterday's election as a success, stating  
that Wahadat was "fully satisfied" with the process. The IEC, he  
contended, has performed well under very challenging circumstances.  
Rumored instances of fraud, intimidation and manipulation, he  
argued, were not sufficient to undermine the credibility of the  
process broadly. Natiqi characterized elections day as an  
expression of the Afghan people's support and determination for a  
democratic political order, and a serious blow to the enemies of  
Afghanistan. He was confident that a majority of Afghans were able  
to access and participate in the elections, conceding that security  
conditions in some areas did prevent a minority from casting their  
ballots. Natiqi credited political parties, civil society, and  
associations for encouraging broad participation. He acknowledged  
that women's participation was still low relative to that of male  
votes. Natiqi indicated that Wahadat supporters had turned out in  
significant numbers in Bamiyan (RC East), Daikuni (RC South), Ghowr  
(RC West), Balkh (RC North), Nangarhar (RC East), and Kabul (RC  
Capital). He was supremely confident that the incumbent, President  
Karzai, would emerge victorious. To illustrate his point, he noted  
that of the approximately 1.1 million ballots reportedly counted so  
far, as many as 800,000 of them went to President Karzai (Note: the  
Canadian Embassy has not verified this figure). He suggested that  
political parties had played a crucial and decisive role in this

election, both in terms of mobilizing the population as well as in safeguarding the credibility of the process through observation (he noted that Wahadat had deployed as many as 29 thousand observers on polling day).

The Canadian Embassy also today spoke with Mr. Fazel Hussain Sancharaki, the Spokesperson of the National Front (supporting Dr. Abdullah), to solicit his views on, and reactions to, polling day, as well as on next steps for the Abdullah campaign. Sancharaki described polling day as a success, despite some challenges, and expressed Dr. Abdullah's gratitude to all those who had participated. He reminded Canadian Embassy officials of the many concerns flagged by the Abdullah campaign with respect to irregularities and acts of intimidation, and indicated that they would be lodging formal complaints with the IEC and ECC shortly. These complaints will include claims of interference in the election by government officials, use of improper materials (ink), and insufficient elections equipment and materials. He also noted that members of the security services had arrested Abdullah campaign personnel and observers in Kandahar (RC South) on polling day. Sancharaki flagged insecurity and insurgent activity as a significant barrier to participation in some areas of the country, but assessed that a majority of Afghans were able to access polling centers - the National Front estimates that between 5 and 7 million Afghans cast ballots. He considered participation rates amongst Afghan women as "acceptable". Sancharaki indicated that the Abdullah campaign and the National Front are concerned by low voter turn-out, however, in some of the more troubled provinces including Kandahar (RC South), Ghazni (RC East) and Wardak (RC East), where they believe only 5-10% of the electorate voted. When asked where he believed Dr. Abdullah had received the most support, Sancharaki claimed (unverified) that Dr. Abdullah received as much as 80% of the vote in Ghor (RC West), and a majority of the votes in Balkh (RC North), Badakshan (RC North), Sar-e Pol (RC North), Samangan (RC

North), Kapisa (RC East), Paktia (RC East), Paktika (RC East) and Lowgar (RC East). He expressed his confidence that Dr. Abdullah is leading the race for the presidency, and is likely to win election. On the Provincial Council elections, Sancharaki noted that they were completely overshadowed by the Presidential race. Nevertheless, he claimed that the political parties associated with the National Front fielded "many" candidates, and he was hopeful that they would do well.

#### 13. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

##### RC South:

-- Helmand: British Embassy reported as of 1300, no major news from Helmand today, but it looks like reasonable turnout in Lashkar Gah might have counterbalanced low turnout in the districts, so that the total is respectable (if not high) overall.

##### RC-East:

-- Nothing new to report.

##### RC North:

-- Nothing new to report.

##### RC West:

--Ghor: Ghor is back to normal today. UNDP and IEC report that ballot counting went well last night. There were only minor problems in one of the districts when PC candidates tried to interfere with the count (they were unsuccessful). IEC expects the first shipment of sensitive materials to arrive in Chaghcharan August 22 and hope to have all the materials by August 25.

##### RC Central:

-- Nothing new to report.

##### ----- Voter Turnout -----

#### 14. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

-- Lashkar Gah: PRT Lashkar Gah reports it lacks ballot count information from the districts to compare against Stabads' guesstimates of turnout, and has no information about turnout in Lashkar Gah. The PRT continues to estimate 20 to 30 percent turnout in the districts. For Lashkar Gah, an advisor to the governor estimated 50 percent turnout.

RC East:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC North:

These are rough, anecdotal estimates by UNAMA:

-- Kunduz province - low (consistent with our observations)  
-- Badakhshan - medium to high  
-- Takhar - medium to high, but slightly lower than Badakhshan  
-- Baghlan - low to medium, lowest in Baghlan-i-Jadid where there were clashes with insurgents for much of the day  
German newsweekly Der Spiegel quotes Kunduz Gov. Omar as saying only one polling station was able to open in Chahar Dara district and hardly anyone voted there (this is consistent with what we've heard from other sources). Omar is quoted as estimating turnout for the province at 50%.

RC West:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC Central:

-- Nothing new to report.

-----  
Security  
-----

15. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC East:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC North:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC West:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC Central:

-- Nothing new to report.

-----  
Voting & Counting Activities  
-----

16. (U) As of 11:45 am local time, 3039 of 6210 centers had completed their counts, 48 percent of total centers that opened on election day. There have been several unconfirmed reports that convoys carrying elections materials have come under fire in Baghdiz and other provinces as they move from districts to the provincial centers. The tally center at IEC has not yet become functional as of this report.

17. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

-- Helmand: The count is still ongoing in Gereshk, and counted ballots are beginning to trickle into the IEC warehouse from the

districts. Ballots from Sangin and Nad Ali have arrived already, and the MEB will fly in ballots from Khanashin and Nowzad late tonight. We have no information about the status of the count in Lashkar Gah, and we understand that the IEC refused to provide Gov Mangal with info.

RC East:

-- Nuristan: As of 1300 August 21, eight of nine polling sites for Nurgram district have delivered their tally sheets and ballots to the collection point at Nurgram district center. PEO Omar Sami is now at Nurgram (vice Jalalabad or Parun) and is at work. Omar expects Dow Ab materials to arrive tomorrow 22 August. Six of eight polling sites materials at the Dow Ab district center, to set off for Nurgam tomorrow.

-- Parwan: Today by 1300, ballots had come in to provincial IEC HQ in Charikar from Jabal Saraj, Sayed Khel, Salang, Charikar, and Bagram districts, while ballots from Kohe Safi arrived last night. A single convoy with ANP escort is currently en route from the four Western Parwan districts, due in to Charikar this evening. IEC, with ANP escort, departed Charikar at 1500 with tally sheets from the tranche of ballots already in Charikar. According to the IEC, ANP has been very cooperative in fulfilling all of its security escort duties. PEO Taj Ali told PRT that counting continues in district centers throughout Paktika. He shared general numbers of ballots cast in five of the province's 23 districts (19 official, 4 unofficial). Though this limited sample does not include the population centers of Sharana, Orgun, or Bermel, whose counts are still ongoing, the numbers connote strong participation from the province's approximately 600,000 registered voters.

Khair Kot:	50,000 votes cast
Sarobi:	30,000
Joni Khel:	28,000
Waza Khwa:	24,000
Sar Hawza:	17,000

RC North:

-- Balkh: Vote counting has finished in Jowzjan and Samangan provinces. Tally sheets are enroute to the provincial IEC offices. As of 11:00 this morning, votes were still being counted at 27 voting centers in Balkh province and at 16 voting centers in Sar-e-pul province. An advisor to the regional IEC said that eight voting centers in Sar-e-pul and eleven in Faryab have not reported their results due to communications difficulties. By Monday, the

IEC advisor expects all tally sheets will have arrived in Mazar.

RC West:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC Central:

-- Nothing new to report.

-----  
Fraud  
-----

18. (SBU) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC South:

-- Helmand: The Lashkar Gah count is still ongoing, and given the procedural smoothness yesterday we are uncertain what is causing the delay. There was one report at midday of bundled ballots arriving by car at a polling station in the middle of counting and being added to the tally; we think these votes were for Abdullah.

RC East:

-- Nothing new to report.

RC North:  
-- Nothing new to report.

RC West:  
-- Nothing new to report.

RC Central:  
-- Nothing new to report.

-----  
Public Affairs  
-----

19. (U) NEW MESSAGING:

110. (U) AFGHAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS:

AFGHAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

--The lead story in the Afghan media was the continuous coverage of the Afghan elections.

--In a press conference Friday afternoon, the IEC said that counting the votes in all provinces, except Kabul, Baghlan, Nengarhar and Herat has ended. The IEC said that preliminary results will be announced August 25. The IEC did not give any timetable for the final results. However, it said that final results will be announced after thoroughly investigating all complaints about vote rigging in some provinces. It added that if vote rigging in an area is confirmed, all ballot boxes in that area would be quarantined.

--Both President Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, his main rival, claimed victory. President Karzai's campaign chief Din Mohammed said that preliminary results indicate that President Karzai was the clear winner and that there would be no need to go to the second round.

--In a Tolo interview today, President Karzai's media representative, Waheed Omar, backtracked from previous statements made by President Karzai's campaign manager Din Mohammad declaring a victory by President Karzai. He noted while the assessments by their polling agents showed them to be in the lead and gave them confidence that they would emerge victorious, only the IEC could declare the winner of the elections. He also noted that predictions that a second round would not take place was in their interest and acknowledged that this decision could only be made after the IEC announcement of the results. When pressed by the Tolo reporter about broad coverage of President Karzai's claims of victory, Omar reiterated that Din Mohammad's comments to Reuters been picked up and run by others including the BBC. He claimed that the campaign only made comments about being in the lead to Reuters.

-- The IEC called on all candidates to exercise cautious and restraint. It added that it was too early for any candidate to claim victory.

--The IEC rejected claims of victory by President Karzai in Xinhua press and stressed that any predictions about any result announced by any person or organization was inaccurate.

--Fazil Sancharak, spokesperson of Abdullah Abdullah, said that results from various provinces indicate that Abdullah has won 61

percent of the vote. He also added that there was vote rigging in at least three provinces.

--Pajhwok news agency quoted the Afghanistan Supreme Court as saying that Saturday August 22, will be the first day of the holy month of Ramadan.

EIKENBERRY